

Lesson 4

How to Write a Personal History

Introduction

A personal history is one way to leave a legacy that descendants will treasure for generations. As you create your personal history, you can make sure the information is accurate. If you leave someone else to rely on memories and secondhand stories to create your history, it may not reflect your life accurately.

Resources and information in this lesson include:

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Why Create a Personal History?

Ask yourself these questions—if your parents, grandparents, and other ancestors didn’t leave life histories, do you wish they had? Do you wish you could read about their life? If you answer “yes,” then don’t leave your descendants to wish the same thing!

A record of your life can be a great gift? Words in print can be read and reread, pondered over, and returned to. The words your teenager rejects now may become clear and precious when he or she rereads them later in life.

You could have a great effect on those who follow you. Your example, your trials, and your triumphs will strengthen and motivate others. The prophet Job of the Old Testament, who suffered many trials, mourned, “oh that my word were now written! Oh that they were printed in

a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!” (Job 19:23–24). His words were written, and his triumph over tragedy and his faith have remained an example of devotion to people of the world for hundreds of years.

Writing your history now can also provide you with an opportunity to evaluate your life. It may help you clarify your direction in life. Even if your childhood wasn’t idyllic, writing about it can help you cope with your feelings and possibly find understanding and forgiveness.

When Should I Create My Personal History?

Start writing your personal history now. Do not put off writing until you have more time or until you retire. People rarely have time to do all they want or need to do, and no one knows how long they will live, so don’t procrastinate. No one else can write your personal history the way you can. The longer you wait to write it, the more details you will be likely to forget. This story is about your life, and it should be written by you.

When writing your history, set realistic and specific goals. For example, you could set a goal to complete a first draft in three months. A final draft could be ready for review in six months. In nine months, you could have a finished copy ready for photocopying and distribution to family members. Or it may be more realistic for you to write one chapter a week for the next 12 months or to write about one subject each week or to write one page a day. Do what you can, but do it regularly and consistently.

Different Types of Personal Histories

You can preserve your life history and memories in many ways. The following are a few ideas:

A Written History

For those who enjoy writing, a written biography is a great way to record your history. A written biography could include the following:

- Your personal account of events in your life.
- Photographs of events, friends, family members, homes you grew up in, places you’ve traveled, and other experiences of interest in your life.
- Copies of family records, such as your birth and marriage certificates, school records, diplomas, religious certificates, awards, and other records of interest.

Journals

Journals are an excellent way of preserving history. Where a personal history tends to be broader in scope and generally covers a greater period of time, a journal can preserve the day-to-day or week-to-week events of your life. It provides a more intimate and detailed account of your daily experiences. Even though journal writing often covers many years of one’s life, it is easier for some people to accomplish because it consists of a small amount of time each day or week or rather than a large amount of time all at once.

A journal will often cover more than just day-to-day activities in your life. It often contains insights, expressions of emotion, observations about events of the day and how they affect you

and your family, musings, and so on. Many people also include drawings or photographs of people, places, and events in their journal, which can add an interesting dimension.

Record of Milestones

Creating a record of milestones is like writing in a journal, except it tends to be less frequent. It's a record of important events such as birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, deaths, life-changing experiences, and major accomplishments and includes a person's feelings regarding the milestones. Some people use scrapbooks to chronicle their important milestones.

Electronic Recordings

With the development of electronic devices, such as video equipment and tape recorders, recording history is easier than ever. Using electronic equipment to record your history, you can include much more than is typically found in a written history. An electronic record of your history could include the sound of your voice, the singing of songs, the playing of a musical instrument, or visual images.

If you use electronic equipment to record your history, understand that the medium you are using will deteriorate or become outdated. Tapes should be played once a year to prevent the sound from bleeding through the tape. Computer discs, hardware, and software programs can become outdated with time. After a few years, you may have difficulty finding a computer or computer program that will read what you have recorded. You should review the medium you used on a regular basis. (Once a year is best.) Before it gets hard to find equipment to play or read what you have recorded, you should transfer your history onto an updated medium.

Expert Tip: *If you plan to record your personal history electronically, be aware that electronic media does not retain quality for very long. Electronic recordings should be transcribed onto archival quality paper.*

Oral Histories

Oral histories are an excellent way to record a personal history. An oral history preserves the voice of a person. It is a great alternative for those who don't feel they have the skills or the desire to write. Those who struggle with writing might find it easy to sit down and talk about their lives. Some people love to talk and find that an oral history is an easy way to preserve personal history. For many people, having someone record stories from their life is a fun and deeply touching experience.

Scrapbooking

Scrapbooking has become a popular form of preserving memories and can be a great alternative or addition to a written personal history. It focuses on documenting special events through the use of photographs and other memorabilia. Scrapbooks tend not to be as comprehensive as a written personal history, but they provide an excellent visual history. Scrapbook supplies and classes on scrapbooking are often readily available.

Expert Tip: *Keeping a journal and a scrapbook together can help you create an excellent history of your life. Narratives and journal entries help provide greater historical and interpretive context to each photograph in your scrapbook.*

Brief personal narratives, life highlights, or memoirs

Narratives are another form of personal history. These narratives document memorable events. The narratives are usually brief and often take only a few minutes to write. Many people find it helpful to set aside a set time each week to write a narrative. For example, one woman spends an hour writing each Sunday afternoon while her young children take a nap. During each session she writes two or three short narratives. These narratives can later be polished and compiled into a longer history.

Appendix A of this lesson gives a list of subjects for personal narratives. You do not need to limit yourself to these topics. They may remind you of other events that you might want to write about as well.

Before You Begin Writing

After considering the options listed above, decide what type of history to start with. Whether you are going to write, video tape, or make a scrapbook of your personal history, you should consider the following:

- Gather everything you can find about your life that might help you remember events.
- Organize the items according to the type of history you plan to create.
- Consider carrying note cards with you, and record memories as they come to mind. As you try to remember events of your life, they will begin coming back with amazing accuracy. Often these memories will come at inconvenient times. Note cards provide an easy way to record these memories regardless of when they come.
- As you have time, elaborate on some of your memories. Add more details than what you may have written on your note cards.
- Talk into a tape or video recorder to record some preliminary ideas. You may want to transcribe the recording later or use it as a starting point for your writing.
- Ask relatives and friends to share memories and stories they remember about you. These recollections are extremely valuable; relatives and friends often remember events that happened when you were too young to remember. Or they may remember things that might not have seemed important to you at the time they occurred.

Potential Subjects for Your History

Listed below are general topics you might consider as you prepare to write. Appendix A provides an additional list of questions to prompt your memory.

- A list of life events in the order they occurred (a chronology)
- A list of the 10 most important things in your life now and details about them
- A health chronology if there are health issues that might affect your descendants

- Family traditions
- Romance
- Personal convictions and learning experiences
- Childhood memories
- Family members—ancestors and descendants
- Funny or embarrassing experiences
- Society, geography, and entertainment around you (anything that gives a context for your life)
- Examples of your talents (poems, artwork, songs)
- Challenges and how they shaped you
- Stories of your life experiences
- Stories or comments about you contributed by others
- Advice you wish to share with future generations. These words may be the most precious words you leave to your loved ones.

Expert Tip: *If you plan to create something to be printed and published formally, check with a few publishers. They will be able to tell you what you need to know to prepare your materials for publication. This information could prevent extra effort retyping or reformatting your work later.*

Start Writing

As you begin writing, do not be too critical of your writing skills. Get the information, stories, feelings, and events recorded first. Later you can polish what you have written. These suggestions may help you begin your personal history:

- Begin your narrative at an exciting point in your life. You do not have to begin by listing your date of birth. Get your readers interested, and then they will also enjoy learning the facts.
- Do not worry about style, grammar, and punctuation at this point. Write however feels most comfortable for you.
- Include information about the location of the story or the local history at the time. Describe clothing, the appearance of the room where the story took place, and so on. Try to include the emotions of the participants. Give enough detail to make things interesting (see the example in the Teacher Suggestions at the end of this lesson). Do not let your writing become a list of dates and places without stories and background to bring them to life.
- Be willing to laugh at yourself. Let your personality and humor come through.
- Do not be afraid to write about your weaknesses as well as your strengths. If you feel comfortable writing about mistakes you have made, include what you learned from them.

and what consequences you suffered. Always be truthful and honest about your life. If something is too uncomfortable to share, just exclude it and move on.

- Be careful about extremely sensitive issues, especially if other people were involved. You want to be very careful not to libel or embarrass others.
- Remember your story doesn't have to be told in chronological order. Digress whenever you feel like it. These digressions might just be the most interesting parts of your story!

Other Things to Include

In addition to writing about your memories, you may want to include some of the following items of interest. They can be part of the body of the history or can be added as an appendix.

- Photographs of family, friends, homes, wedding day, yourself at milestone ages, a few vacation highlights, homes you have lived in, schools you attended, and so on
- Your feelings about social, religious, or personal issues
- Lessons you have learned
- Feelings about loved ones
- Dreams for the future
- Excerpts from journals
- Poems you have written
- Newspaper articles about you or events you took part in
- Copies of certificates
- Maps

Writing Challenges

If your writing isn't going well, ask yourself why. Maybe you are writing about a subject that you feel needs to be included but that doesn't really excite you. Ask yourself if it is really important and consider skipping it, at least for now. If you feel it is important, then include it. But realize that hard work is often necessary before inspiration comes. Self-discipline when you don't feel like writing may be the answer, but perhaps taking a few days off might help too.

An afternoon selecting photographs for your history or visiting a place you talk about in your history might give you a good break from writing. (Consider taking a tape recorder with you and speaking into it as you look over the photographs or visit places important to your history.) Activities related to your history might just be enough to get you remotivated.

Sometimes the hardest time in writing is starting. If you can do nothing else, just write one word. Then expand it into a sentence. Add another sentence. Make a paragraph. Once you get started, the writing often becomes easier and more enjoyable. When you need to take a break from your writing, stop in the middle of an interesting story or paragraph. Then, when you come back, it will be easier for you to start again where you left off.

Another way to get started when you are stuck is to start at the easiest part of the story you want to tell or to begin with a subject you want to write about.

If you find that you just cannot continue writing, consider recording your thoughts and memories into a tape recorder. You or someone else can transcribe the recording. Then you can add additional details.

Expert Tip: *If you are using a computer to type your personal history, remember to save your work often. It would be a tragedy to lose all your hard work because of a computer failure.*

Review and Evaluate What You Have Written

Writing a first draft is only the beginning of the process. Some of your best writing will happen as you review what you have written and revise and rewrite sentences that don't work as well as you would like them to.

A trusted friend, your spouse, or another family member can help with this process. Ask yourself and other reviewers the following questions:

- Does the reader feel involved and care about the outcome of the stories?
- Do the stories flow well? If not, how can they be improved?
- Is the identity of the people in the stories clear? For example, if you speak about Grandma, have you explained which grandma? Do you explain which aunt you mean when you say, "My aunt gave me my favorite Christmas gift that year"?
- Does anything need to be clarified?
- Are the sentences too long or complicated?
- Is there too much detail?
- Are there any spelling errors?
- How is the grammar? Often grammar mistakes become obvious if the material is read aloud.
- Are the same words or expressions used too often? Do too many sentences begin with "I remember"?
- Is it clear and organized?
- Do the stories need to be shortened or do more details need to be added to make the stories more enjoyable?
- Are the characters explained and described so the reader knows them?
- Are names, dates, and places accurate?
- Is the proper tense used throughout the history?

After the Review

You must decide what input to incorporate. Decide which feedback is useful and which is not. Sometimes a reviewer will express a concern that will indicate a problem besides the one mentioned. For example, a reviewer might say that a certain story is too long. But perhaps length

is not the real problem; you may need to consider instead how you tell the story or how you describe important events.

Expert Tips: Record your story on tape. Consider reading your story on to tape, and then listen to the recording. Do you feel it is honest and worth listening to? Does it represent your life accurately?

Be careful about using information about living people. You should be extremely sensitive about how you use personal information (dates, sensitive issues, contentious stories, and so on) of individuals who are still alive or who have living family members who may read your history. In some cases, written permission from those you have questions about will help reduce the chances of problems at a later date. Also, be extremely cautious about including addresses and phone numbers of living people.

Decide How You Want Your Finished History to Look

Now is the time to decide where to insert photographs, letters, copies of letters, and so on. It is also a good time to review and correct the appearance of your work. Consider line spacing, headings of chapters, and subheadings.

Decide how you want your history to look when you are finished. You may decide to add or delete some of the design and layout elements listed below as your work progresses:

- Cover page
- Title page
- Preface (where you share thoughts and feelings about your project)
- Table of contents
- List of photographs and illustrations
- Chronology (a quick and concise overview of your life in a page or two)
- Narrative
- Appendixes (family group sheets, pedigree charts, will extracts, handwriting samples, favorite recipes, and so on)
- Maps
- Index

Expert Tip: Be generous with photographs. Most people look at photographs before reading text. Photographs will create interest in reading the accompanying text. Place photographs where they will be relevant to the writing on the page.

Consider the layout of your history, such as which type size, spacing, and font makes the text easy to read. If you are planning to print on both sides of the page, be sure to leave margins on the binding side of each page wide enough to allow for binding, usually at least a quarter inch wider than the normal edge of a typewritten page.

Resources

Web sites to help you write your personal history

www.cyndislist.com/writing.htm (Links to various sites with helps for writing personal histories.)

www.genwriters.com (Helps for writing personal histories.)

www.writingthejourney.com (Techniques for writing personal history with focus on style.)

www.ohanasoftware.com (Tutorial for writing your personal history.)

www.personalhistoryhelp.com (10-step program to writing a personal history.)

Books

- *From Shoe Boxes to Books: Writing Great Personal Histories* by Amy Jo Oaks Long. Ten-step program to create a personal history.
- *From Memories to Manuscript—The Five Step Method of Writing Your Life Story* by Joan R. Neubauer

Ideas for Teachers

This class can be taught in two or more weeks if you feel you need extra time for class members to work on activities outside of class. The following suggestions will help you present this information in a classroom setting. You should consider not only what you will teach but also how you will teach it. Consider the needs of class members, and plan and adapt the materials to meet their needs.

Teaching Goals

- Help class members understand the alternatives for creating a personal history.
- Help class members understand how to start writing a personal history.
- Help class members identify and resolve challenges to writing a personal history.
- Create an awareness of other issues involved in finishing a personal history.
- Help class members learn what resources are available.

Preparing to Teach

- Contact class members and learn their expectations for the class.
- Bring samples of personal histories by others. Try to include examples of alternatives to a written history.
- Consider the ages and life stages of the class members, and plan accordingly. For example, if your class members are all under age 30, you don't need to teach about writing about retirement and other issues that do not concern them.

Teaching Ideas

During the first class

- Ask the class members why they want to write personal histories. Ask who will benefit from their histories. Discuss their answers. This discussion may bring new insights.
- Discuss different types of personal histories and their advantages and disadvantages.
- Explain how to gather personal artifacts that will help recall life events.
- Share the following brief story with your class members:
“My mother really didn't want me to be born on April Fool's Day, so she convinced her doctor to induce her labor in the morning of March 31. Things have changed a lot since 1951, but in those days it was almost unheard of in London, England, for a birth to be induced for the mother's convenience. The young Scottish doctor was willing to be innovative, and I was born three hours before April Fool's Day. The doctor was given the privilege of choosing my name, possibly as part of the inducement deal, and I was given the good Scottish name of Lindsey Mary to go along with my family name, Adams.”

Activities

- Have class members write an example of an opening paragraph for their personal history. Challenge them to write without using the traditional “I was born *day/month/year in town/state/country*.” Help them to write in a way that will get the reader’s attention. It may be helpful to have class members to write two or three opening paragraphs and to choose the one they like best.
- Encourage class members to come to the next class with a story about an event in their lives and a photograph or memento to support the story.
- Encourage class members to begin writing a list of 30 events they remember from their lives.

During the second class

Share the following two statements with the class:

Statement #1

“I did chores in the barn every night.”

Statement #2

“Every night was an adventure in the barn. Josie was a cow with a bad attitude and a wicked sense of humor. She also had perfect aim. Whether I was milking her, feeding her, or cleaning up after her, she was a constant challenge. As soon as the milk pail was full, she would watch for her opportunity to kick it over. She never tried until the bucket was full. Every time I passed behind her to bring her hay or with a shovel to clean up, I had to move fast and keep a close eye on her. She could move that right hind leg so fast and hard that I often had to jump to avoid it. She would lull me into false confidence by being calm for a few days, and then she would get me with perfect aim. Depending on my emotional state, it was either a challenge and a game or a totally infuriating burden in my life.”

Ask which of the above was more interesting. Then do the following.

- Have one or more class members share a story they wrote during the past week.
- Ask the class members to exchange their written stories with another class member. Give them time to read the stories, and then let them ask questions about the stories. Encourage them to get clarification and additional details about the stories and to give suggestions. Explain how this activity can help make a better personal history.
- Ask the class members what items they collected during the week to remind them of events.
- Ask class members what they want their descendants to know about them. How will they incorporate that information in their personal history?

Activities

- Review the suggested Web sites and books the class members could use for help.

- Review the list of topics in Appendix A, and ask class members to think of something they could add to that list. As class members come up with new topics, have them add those topics that interest them to their lists.

Appendix A

Questions to Prompt Personal Recollections

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| When and where were you born? | What kinds of games did you play? |
| How did you get your name? | What were your favorite toys? |
| What did you look like as a baby? | What were your favorite family activities? |
| What color are your eyes? What color is your hair? | How did you feel about taking naps as a child? |
| What are your earliest memories? | Were you a happy child? |
| Who is your mother? Describe her appearance and personality. | What made you mad when you were a little child? |
| Did your mother work outside the home? What did she do? | What did you like to eat when you were little? |
| Who is your father? Describe him and his personality. | What were your childhood fears? |
| Did your father do home repairs? What were his hobbies? | What were your childhood dreams? |
| What was your father's occupation? | What health challenges did you have? |
| How many siblings do you have? What are their names? | What are your earliest school memories? |
| Where do you fit in the family? | How did you get to school as a young child? |
| What family rules did you have? | Did you do well in school? What were your successes and failures? |
| What did your parents value? | What did you like most about school as a young child? |
| Did you have assignments or chores when you were a child? | What did you like least about school as a young child? |
| Did you get along well with your siblings when you were children? | What pets did you have as a young child? |
| Do you get along well with your siblings now? | Did you ever get lost when you were young? What happened? |
| Did you know your grandparents? What were they like? | What organized groups did you belong to, (Scouts, 4H, and so on)? |
| Did you know any of your great-grandparents? Tell about them. | How did you feel about church when you were little? |
| Who were your earliest friends? | |
| Where did you play? | |

What religious values did your parents teach at home?

What do you remember about the house you lived in?

What do you remember about other homes you have lived in?

What were some of your family traditions?

How did your family celebrate Christmas?

What was your favorite Christmas gift?

Describe your hometown at Christmas time.

What was the best family trip you ever experienced?

How did you celebrate birthdays?

How did your parents discipline you?

Was reading important in your family?

What did you like to read when you were a child?

Was music important in your family?

What musical instrument did you learn to play?

Tell about special talents in your family.

What special family heirlooms did you have?

Did you grow a garden?

Describe your childhood dreams for your future.

Describe your physical appearance as a child.

What games did your family play?

Did your family go on picnics?

Describe the neighborhood you lived in as a child.

Where did you shop when you were a child?

Did you move during your childhood?

What did you want to be when you grew up?

What was your favorite thing to do when you were a teenager?

What was your favorite food when you were a teenager?

Describe the school you attended as a teenager.

What were your hobbies during your teenage years?

What sports did you enjoy playing?

Describe your physical appearance as a teenager.

What illnesses or accidents did you have as a teenager?

Who were your friends?

What did you read as a teenager?

Did you like movies?

What was your favorite type of music?

Did you date during your teens?

What was your favorite date during your teens?

What was your strangest date?

Did you have a steady boy or girlfriend?

Was peer pressure a problem?

Tell about learning to drive.

How did you get to school?

Were you a good student?

Tell about a strange fashion during your teenage years.

What were your religious beliefs as a young adult?

What college or university did you attend?

What did you enjoy about your college years?

What was the most important thing you learned during your college years?

Where did you live as a college student?

Tell about your early romances.

Who were your friends during your college years?

Did you get a degree? If so, what was your subject?

What was your first job?

What was your job through most of your working life?

Why did you choose your career?

Tell about successes and failures in your career.

If you had a chance to choose another career what would it be?

What has been your biggest responsibility in your adult life?

What is the biggest challenge you have faced in your life?

How has the relationship with your parents changed since you became an adult?

What did you look for in a future spouse?

Tell how you met your future spouse.

What did you do on dates with your future spouse?

How long did you know each other before getting engaged?

What attracted you to your future spouse?

Tell how you got engaged.

How long were you engaged?

Where did you meet your future in-laws?

What challenges did you face in planning a wedding?

Tell about your wedding day (weather, clothes, and so on).

What problems did you encounter on your wedding day?

What special gifts did you receive from your wedding?

How old were you and your spouse when you got married?

Where did you get married?

Where did you spend your honeymoon?

What were your plans and dreams when you married?

Where was your first home after you married?

Tell about any interesting or unusual things in your first home.

How much rent did you pay per month?

What surprised you most about your spouse?

Do you get along well with your in-laws?

Share some memories of your early married days.

What was the hardest adjustment in marriage?

How hard was it to manage finances as newlyweds?

Describe the first home you owned.
When did you buy it?

How much did your first home cost?

How many times have you moved during your life?

How much time passed before the birth of your first child?

Tell about the births of your children.
How did you choose your children's names?
Tell about the differences between your children.
Do your children get along together well?
What were your biggest challenges in raising your children?
What would you do differently in raising your children?
Have you fulfilled any childhood dreams during your adult years?
Do you feel you have done a good job managing money?
Tell about any major diseases you have had.
Have you had any major accidents?
Tell about any surgeries you have had.
Are you physically active?
What do you do for leisure?
What sports do you participate in?
What physical or mental challenges do you have?
How is your vision? Do you wear glasses or contacts?
What is your blood type?
Describe your physical appearance as an adult.
What is your favorite food as an adult?
What kind of music do you listen to?
What is your favorite type of book?
Share your religious beliefs.
Do you like to travel or would you rather stay home?
Where have you traveled?

What have you learned from traveling?
Where would you still like to travel?
Describe your relationship with your siblings as an adult.
List all the places where you have lived, including addresses.
Have you served in the military?
Tell about the most unusual person you have ever met.
Tell about your favorite neighbors.
Who are your friends?
What colorful characters live in your neighborhood?
What is the best thing about your community?
What would you like to change in your community?
Tell about the weather where you live.
Do you live in a large or small community?
Have you been involved in your community?
What career changes have you made as an adult?
What is unusual about your appearance?
What do you like best about your physical appearance?
What would you change in your appearance?
What has been your best vacation as an adult?
If you could change the world for your grandchildren, what would be different?
What is your advice to those younger than you?

What are your dreams for your children and grandchildren's future?

What is your greatest achievement?

What would you like people to know about you?

What awards and recognitions have you received?

Describe your present home.

Do you live alone, with a spouse or with others?

What makes you happy?

How have national events influenced your life?

How have international events influenced your life?

How has technology changed during your life?

What other major changes have you seen during your life?

Tell about any major catastrophes.

Tell about major religious events in your life.

What do you still want to accomplish in life?

Tell about your relationship with your spouse.

Tell about your relationship and feelings for each of your children.

What major regrets do you have?

How have you changed during your life?

What pleases you most about your life?

What have you done to make your world a better place?

What are your basic values and beliefs?

How has answering these questions affected you?

Appendix B

Basic Care and Preservation of Photographs, Artifacts, and Documents

As you begin gathering items to help you remember your experiences in your life, you will find that soon you will have a good collection of precious items. Carefully consider the care and preservation of these photographs, artifacts, and important documents. All types of paper, including photographic and document paper, can be damaged by sunlight, dirt, dust, fingerprints, pressure, and general neglect.

If you want to preserve a photograph or document, don't display it! Make a copy of the item, and display the copy. The original should then be stored away from light and extreme temperatures.

The following is a list of things to do and not to do to protect your photographs, artifacts, and documents.

DO NOT:

- Store anything of value in magnetic albums.
- Write with ball point pens on the backs of photos.
- Store photographic negatives in the sleeves that they came in.
- Store negatives with your photographs.
- Handle photographs with dirty hands.
- Write on the front of photographs.
- Place photographs over other photographs in an album.
- Store photographs face to face.
- Store photographs or documents unprotected in wooden drawers or on wooden closet shelves.
- Store photographs or documents with newspaper clippings.
- Store photographs or documents with staples, paperclips, or any metal that may rust.

DO:

- Store photographs and documents in archival-safe plastic sleeves.
- Store sleeves in three ring binders to minimize stacking and pressure on photos and documents.
- Store photographs and negatives in separate storage containers.
- Be sure that hands are clean before touching photographs and documents.
- Thoroughly clean your work area when working with documents and photographs.
- Write gently with a soft pencil around the edge of the back of photographs.
- Make photocopies of letters and other documents, using acid free paper.

- Store original documents in acid free page protectors.

Web sites for photo and document preservation information and supplies

- <http://people.maine.com/photos>
- <http://www.nedcc.org>
- <http://www.loc.gov/preserv>
- <http://www.cyndislist.com/photo.htm>
- <http://www.lib.virginia.edu/preservation/photostore.html>

Books on photo and documents preservation

- *Organizing and Preserving Your Heirloom Documents* by Katherine Scott Sturdevant
- *Crafting Your Own Heritage Album* by Bev Kershner Braun
- *Scrapbooking Your Family History* by Maureen Taylor
- *Preserving Your Family Photographs* by Maureen Taylor
- *An Ounce of Preservation* by Craig Tuttle